



Valley Forge recognizes park seasonal staff, scholars, and interns

July 23, 2009

This year we have bountiful help throughout the Park. About 25 seasonal employees joined the permanent park staff in May and began working with our maintenance, interpretive, natural resources and law enforcement staff in a wide variety of positions. We'd like to thank all of our summer staff and highlight some of their efforts.

Natalie Villwock, PhD candidate from Purdue University is this year's National Park Foundation Transportation Scholar. Funded by a grant from Ford Motor Company, Natalie has worked to plan, oversee, and evaluate the park's new Revolutionary Shuttle. Three students have been working at Washington's Headquarters conducting an archaeological dig. The purpose of this intensive archaeological testing is to provide additional documentation of previously identified intact deposits, with the goal of assessing and documenting the use of the structure and the changing uses of the headquarters building and surrounding yard area over time.

These students are Joe Blondino, Katie Cavallo, and Carin Bloom. Joe Blondino is a PhD candidate in Anthropology at Temple University. His primary research focus is pre-contact Native American groups in the Mid-Atlantic, but he's also very interested in the archaeology of Colonial America and created the research design for the current project at Washington's Headquarters. Katie Cavallo is working on her PhD in historical archaeology at Temple University. Prior to attending Temple, Katie worked for several years as a research assistant in the lab at Historic St. Mary's City in Maryland. This summer Katie is running the lab and is supervising the processing of the artifacts. Carin Bloom is also a PhD student at Temple University and is writing her dissertation on the encampment at Valley Forge based on her work over the past 2 seasons at the Chapel. She is helping with the field work and site interpretation at Washington's Headquarters before leaving to run the Temple Archaeological Field School at the Chapel.

Natural resource management summer staff (three seasonal staff and two internship students) has been involved in a variety of activities this summer. Tina Statkevicz, Hannah Paulson, Bess Trout, Haley Martin, and Taylor McMenamin have focused on suppression of the rusty crayfish and control of non-native, invasive plants such as mile-a-minute weed. They have also assisted with natural resource volunteer groups including the Crayfish Corps, SCA Philly, and Public Lands Crew. Lastly, they are the cornerstone of our ability to maintain and expand our work with partners such as Open Land Conservancy (invasive plant control, trail maintenance), Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (investigation of fish kill) and the Valley Creek Partnership (streambank stabilization). Summer interns are Haley Martin and Bess Trout. Haley is a student at University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Bess is a recent graduate of Washington College in Maryland. Our seasonals are Hannah Paulson, Tina Statkevicz, and Taylor McMenamin. Hannah is a student at West Chester University, and Tina is a student at Susquehanna University. Taylor is our maintenance seasonal and a recent high school graduate.

Each staff member also has an independent project. Bess and Haley are preparing educational elements for the Junior Ranger Adventure camp and will be leaders and VAFO representatives for the camp. Hannah is writing abstracts for park-specific reports to add to the annotated bibliography for the Resource Stewardship Strategy report. Tina is researching historical uses of the fields at VAFO for the Field Management Plan. Taylor is painting the common areas of the Thomas House.

Alicia Angelo is spending this summer as a research intern in the Museum Branch. Her assignment is to conduct primary historical research in the park archives and in other regional institutions in order to develop written material about the hospitals used by the Continental Army during the Valley Forge encampment as well as the cemeteries located near the hospitals. This information will be used to develop additions to the park cell tour, podcasts, exhibits, and interpretive programs. In September Alicia will return to her Master's studies at Villanova University.

Maintenance Staff hired 17 seasonal employees this year working with a variety of skills. We have a custodial team assisting park staff with picnic area trash and rest-room cleanup throughout the park. The mowing crew has been helping to maintain the landscapes and our projects crew, along with park staff, has completed the exterior repairs, rebuilt and replaced doors and windows, and repainted Knox's Barn. Also they have been working on the exterior of Maxwell's Quarters doing windows re-glazing and repainting the over 80 windows and French doors (completed 30 to date). The whole seasonal crew has been assisting with hazardous tree removal, planting, train station storm window modification and installation and modification to the lifeguard huts for exhibits.

In addition to the seasonal staff this summer, the park is being joined by a Student Conservation Association Commuter Crew of 10 youth and two crew leaders from the Philadelphia Area and a Student Conservation Association Public Land Corp Crew of 6 students with two adult's crew leaders from across the nation. Both crews are assisting park staff with invasive species control which includes the removal of invasive crayfish from Valley Creek and preservation maintenance projects. During their time in the park, they will have the opportunities to take part in guided educational hikes and clinics, guided tours in the park and at other area NPS sites and partner organizations. Both crews will be in the park until mid August.

About Valley Forge National Historical Park

Valley Forge National Historical Park is a national icon of the American Revolution that serves as a place where visitors enjoy, understand, care for, and preserve America's history and natural heritage. The Park offers an engaging, complete educational and recreational experience, providing an important piece of the American story in a beautiful, historical, preserved landscape.